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C O R R E C T E D COPY REASON

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [AM](#) [GG](#) [RU](#) [AJ](#)
SUBJECT: AZERBAIJAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST HOSTS GEORGIA
RECONCILIATION MEETINGS

Classified By: POLECON COUNSELOR ROBERT GARVERICK FOR
REASON 1.4 (B and D)

Meeting with Novella Jafaroglu

¶1. (C) Poloff met with prominent Azerbaijan Human Rights activist Novella Jafaroglu (aka Novella Jafarova) about preparations for the upcoming (partially USG-funded) regional meeting she is co-sponsoring in Istanbul. Jafaroglu has an international reputation as a women,s rights and human rights activist, and has received many international awards for her work in these fields. During the course of the meeting Jafaroglu described a series of Georgia/Ossetia reconciliation meetings she has recently organized in Baku and Tbilisi, and plans for related activities including formation of a notional "Caucasus Women's Parliament," which she claimed would critique regional policies and governmental activities, and promote peace and reconciliation.

Georgian/South Ossetian Women Meet

¶2. C) Jafaroglu explained that on October 31, 2008 she hosted a small "reconciliation" conference between Georgian women (including former Georgian residents of South Ossetia) and three current South Ossetia residents. Novella explained that all of the attendees were women,s rights activists whom she had met or had contact with in the past. She said that the concept for the mini-conference emerged after an initial, somewhat impromptu meeting in Istanbul last September, on the side of a women,s rights conference there. According to Novella, the gathering was sponsored by a Swedish NGO called "Women-to-Women" (English translation).

¶3. (C) Jafaroglu said that the Swedish NGO covered all travel expenses, but did not have a representative present at the meeting itself, which she described as "closed." She stressed that there was no foreign diplomatic, press, or GOAJ presence at the (deliberately low-profile) meeting, although she said that she had informed GOAJ Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Khalafov informally about the meeting when she saw him at another event a few hours before the reconciliation mini-conference began.

Ossetians: Attack "Not Genocidal"

¶4. (C) Jafaroglu said that the Baku meeting went well, and was followed up by a larger Tbilisi meeting in mid November also funded by the Swedish group. She said that at these meetings the South Osetians acknowledged that Russian charges of "genocide" by Georgians against South Ossetia were

overblown, and noted that those killed by "reckless" Georgian artillery included Russians and Georgians living in South Ossetia. She said that they characterized such casualties as indiscriminate "victims of war."

¶15. (C) Nonetheless, Jafaroglu said, the Ossetian women were very critical of Georgian President Sakashvili for his allegedly confrontational policy towards South Ossetia, comparing this negatively to an allegedly laissez faire approach pursued by former President Shevardnadze. "We (originally) had no desire to leave Georgia," Novella quoted one of the Ossetians "it was the Georgian government that pushed us toward Russia."

Working Towards Reconciliation

¶16. (C) Jafaroglu claimed that there was wide agreement on the need for national and political reconciliation between the Georgians and Ossetians, and for otherwise calming the political waters. She said that while the Ossetians held Sakashvili responsible for the immediate crisis, they made no effort to justify the subsequent massive Russian attacks on Georgia. She recounted that one South Ossetian had described movingly how, after the fighting, she had climbed a high hill overlooking Georgian-administered territory and saw burned villages and unburied bodies of civilians lying in the streets. Jafaroglu said that the woman related that she wept upon observing this scene.

Future Caucasus Women,s Parliament?

¶17. (C) Jafaroglu said that the group agreed to work together in developing joint reconciliation projects. She added that she expects that most of these delegates, as well as other women from Georgia and South Ossetia, will attend a notional conference she plans to hold in Baku in December or January, tentatively entitled "Caucasus Women Against War." In addition to Georgians, Ossetians, Abkhaz, etc., this conference will also notionally include women from Armenia, Nagorno-Karabagh (both Armenian current residents and Azerbaijani refugees), Azerbaijan proper, and possibly other regional countries as well.

¶18. (C) Jafaroglu added that the mid-November Tbilisi meeting had adopted a proposal to use this future meeting to explore the possibility of establishment of a Caucasus Women's Parliament including women from all the above groups that would critique regional policies of their governments and promote regional reconciliation and peace.

¶19. (C) Jafaroglu said that she has outlined these ideas with GOAJ Deputy Foreign Minister Khalaf Khalafov, and asked for his help in facilitating entry into Baku of the Armenian and Nagorno-Karabagh participants in the upcoming regional conference. She said Khalafov promised to discuss this proposal with "those responsible," which she assumed includes Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev.

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